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RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE

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SIPDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (CLASSIFICATION DOWNGRADE TO SBU)

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

NSC FOR WATERS AND DAVIS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [KDEM](#) [EG](#)  
SUBJECT: MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD PARLIAMENTARIANS ATTEND  
PRESIDENTIAL PALACE EVENT

REF: CAIRO 1641

¶1. (U) According to Egyptian press reports, five Muslim Brotherhood (MB) parliamentarians, in an unusual and notable development, participated in a recent event at the Presidential Palace. President Mubarak reportedly hosted a June 23 breakfast to celebrate the signing of new education-related legislation (details of which to be reported septel), at which a large number of parliamentarians were in attendance, including MB MP's Mahmoud Megahed, Hamdi Hassan, Gamal Hanafi, Sobhi Saleh, and Mohamed al Gazzar. First Lady Suzanne Mubarak and presidential son Gamal Mubarak reportedly were also present.

¶2. (U) Following initial press reports about the event, an apparently defensive MB leadership was quoted as follows in the independent daily Al Dustour (reported in the June 25 edition): "The invitation was a routine one, and the MB had to respond to it regardless of the conflicts between the group and the regime" (Deputy Supreme Guide Mohamed Habib), "the visit was a normal thing ... the MB considers Mubarak the president of all Egyptians, and we do not contest his legitimacy (activist senior MB member Essam El Erian), and "the visit was routine ... the MB MP's went to the palace and left like all the other MP's who attended. Also, three MB MP's previously attended a similar meeting at the Presidential Palace" (leading MB member Gamal Heshmat). On June 26, Rose el Youssef (an "independent" daily widely believed to be funded by branches of the Egyptian security services, and NDP Secretary for Organization Ahmed Ezz), published an op-ed by board chairman Karam Gabr, noting that, "The visit (of the MB MP's to the Presidential Palace) stands as proof that the Egyptian state does not hate the MB solely because it is the MB. If the MB were to take a specific position on whether it is a political group or a 'Da'wa' (proselytizing) group, it could also enjoy the fruits of political reform like the rest of Egyptians."

¶3. (SBU) Comment: This curious incident is illustrative of the paradoxical status of the MB in Egypt - a "banned organization" whose parliamentary representatives can attend an event hosted by the president. The apparent presidential invitation to MB MP's stands in stark contrast to GOE umbrage that recent meetings held by visiting CODEL's with Egyptian parliamentarians have included the head of the MB's parliamentary bloc (reftel).  
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